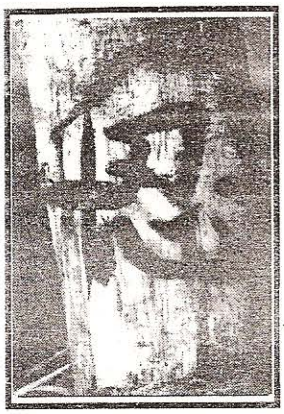
JAPAN:
THE LAND OF THE TREE
(SANSHIN NO KATA)
SPIRIT FORM OF
THREE HEARTS



三心の型

A monk once said, "Hundreds and thousands of leaves grow from one root". Simply speaking, he was saying that even a giant tree with small branches and thousands of leaves came from one seed. Without the seed no tree will grow. The giant tree depends for it's growth on its root system.

I decided to have a chat with a giant tree. The following is the conversation between myself and the tree.

"Hello, Big Tree, how many birthdays have you celebrated?"

"I have no idea. There are so many annual rings in my body I get dizzy counting them!!"

"Is that right! Do you remember when you were very small?"

"Yes, I remember eating delicious Nitron, Phosphoric Acid and Potassium, all the good stuff that helped me grow this big."

"Well, Great Tree, for martial arts, we have a teaching of the spirit of three hearts (*Sanshin No Kata*). This teaching is based on the saying that the spirit of three years old is with a man until he is a hundred years old. We recognize the importance of early childhood and treasure these important years, when one is unaware of ego, independence and consciousness.

This *Sanshin No Kata* (form of spirit of three hearts) is described in a section of secret teachings of the *Gyokko Ryu*, which teaches beginners that we have to train ourselves with the spirit of a three year old, not forgetting the spirit even though they think they accomplish these techniques."

"Wow, what is it, asks the Big Tree?"

"Well, I can demonstrate the Kata for you. This Kata represents the most important feeling as a martial artist. It is a very simple movement, something we do intrinsically and naturally. The basis of *Sanshin No Kata* is artistic but also very uncomplicated. Your body movement while doing this I is quite different from the movements of *Kihon Happo*.

There are a total of 10 Katas: 5 Katas for the right side of the body and another 5 for the left. These 10 *Katas* are called the *Shoshin no Kata* (Kata of First Body) in Densho (Book of Teaching). The 5 Katas are classified as the 5 elements of Nature, that is Earth, Water, Fire, Wind and Sky.

By training in these Katas, a student begins to recognize the 5 elements and the truth of Nature."

HERE YOU MUST REFER TO THE PHOTOS THAT BEGIN ON PAGE THREE AS I DEMONSTRATE THE KATAS FOR MY TREE FRIEND.

(After I have completed my demonstration my conversation with the tree resumes.)

"You are moving very naturally." the tree whispers.

"That's right, I answer. The good point of this Kata is to move naturally and not to make Kata (forms) intentionally. Every movement is very simple and flows from one form to another."

"I see, every thing should be done simply and naturally. Many of us forget the important point of being simple and natural nowadays. I hear so much about lethal ashes, acid rain, and other air pollution, which is a result of people damaging Nature."

"Sorry, friend Tree, that we have caused all these bad things. That is why I try to introduce Budo to as many people as possible so that we

can preserve Nature. I want to make a bigger circle of *Buyu* (friends of martial arts) who treasure Nature. Budo teaches us to flow with nature not against it."

"If so, we trees can continue to supply you with more oxygen."

"Thank you so much, I appreciate your support. There is a lot for me to do such as making people aware of their destructive action and stopping it so that they become better people. My calling also

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tells me that I must elevate the relationship of an instructor and students to the level of *Buyu* relationship so that we are all friends, with no one superior or inferior to the other. These things are very difficult to accomplish."

"I can understand your agony, *Soke*. As people grow, they tend to change and separate themselves to follow their own way. Animals wean themselves from their parents and leaves fall from us trees. This is natural law. When we grow and find our own identity, we change and depart from the original place where we were nurtured."

"That's so correct, my stately friend. There are four seasons in Japan and we appreciate the beauty of each season. This beauty is especially enhanced at the time of seasonal change. There is sadness and loneliness in the beauty of the seasons. As the seasons change and mature we see their beauty more clearly. Queen Elizabeth once mentioned that the nature is beautiful as it changes."

"I agree with you that the beauty of nature is most apparent when it changes", the tree replies.

"I have often felt that my relationship with students was somewhat unstable. You can compare it with the change of nature. Sometimes our relationship was swept away by a gale of wind. I felt lost then and became very lonely. I compare these moments with seasons. As fall is represented with falling leaves and winter with snow covered mountain, they are cold and harsh. But the change of scenery comforts my lonely heart. As we admire the beauty of winter, soon we encounter the budding of new growth on the tree, the sign of coming spring. Before you know it, we grow bigger and another annual ring is added. We have to go through the fall and winter of our life before we can really appreciate spring. Life and nature are very much alike."

"So you just keep going", sighs the understanding tree.

"Exactly. I began to understand when Takamatsu Sensei used to say "*Bufuu Ikkan*" (The consistent way of martial arts). It means that *Bufuu* (The way of martial arts) enfolds different aspects of life just as a year has four seasons and each season has a different wind such as spring wind, summer wind, fall wind and winter wind. Mr. Big Tree, is there anything you are afraid of now that you become so big?"

"I don't like strong wind, but what I really am afraid of is the lightning. You see a lot of men seek a shelter under the big tree, in life. They try to seek favors of a master mind by flattering him, thinking he too will be as great as their master because he takes care of him. They forget that flattery leads nowhere. And if they continue to seek favors instead of training themselves to be better, they may encounter the archenemy of the big tree, the lightning. The taller the tree is the higher the chance of being attacked by the lightning."

"You have a point there, Tree."

"So some of the big trees grow sideways instead of growing taller. They still are pretty but they are so called, 'street smart' because they won't be targeted by the lightning nearly as often as the tall tree."

"The way of living for the tree and man could be similar," I reply thoughtfully.

"Hatsumi kun, I understand you are *Ninja*. You can go freely in the world, whereas I am rooted in the ground and have no liberty of movement."

"The truth is the same, Giant Tree. What is most important to man is his roots. One has to stand firmly on the ground being nurtured by his roots. The roots provide the truth which is most important to man. Unless we have roots we can't live a wholesome life."

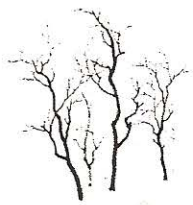
"I don't understand what you are saying."

"In Eastern medicine, the liver and kidney are considered the key to one's health. If either one of the organs is not functioning properly, one tends to fall ill. In *Budo*, the key to the wholesome way is to have "*Kishin Kigan*" (God's heart and God's eye), just like the healthy liver and kidney are the key to good health. So the *Ninja* has to have a heart of justice and use the right method to fight for justice against evil. The right method comes not only from your will but from some natural force, some may call it God. In order to catch or receive this right method one needs the roots because they work as either earth or antenna. Unless you gain the right method and know how to handle it properly, you won't be a *Ninja*."

Takamatsu Sensei gave me a *Nanga* picture (Chinese style picture) depicting the scenery of late fall about 30 years ago. The picture brightens my mind every time I see it, as if the sun is shining over me. Surprisingly the picture inspires me to draw. I wonder if I become a true *Budoka*. (Note: Budoka, like *Musashi*, was also well known as a great painter.) The picture depicts desolate nature with trees barren of green and golden leaves. I am very happy to know that the relationship between *Takamatsu Sensei* and myself developed into something that I feel very proud of. We remained closely together as a teacher and a student throughout our relationship and never broke it, and our relationship became more of *Buyu*. On the contrary, I am saddened when one of my students leaves like an autumn leaf falling from the tree. I remember O'Henry's poem, "One Leaf".

I wrote a poem with regard to the tree, hoping that it will nurture your mind and help improve your skill when you train the *Shoshin no Kata*. Please read the poem below and let it speak to your hearts.

So all of you, friends of *Budokan*, please use the Dojo as it is finished. I am old, and a lonely man. I would be happy living with you, for you can warm me with your warm heart.



A happy country, Japan
..... the land of the tree.

THE MESSAGE FROM THE BIG TREE

A cold wintry wind blows right through me and I wonder why I feel so cold inside.

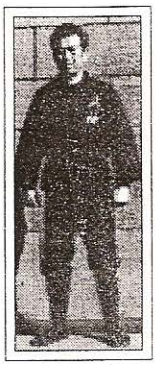
Every leaf on the tree wanted to tell me something, feeling sorry for the change of heart by so many men.

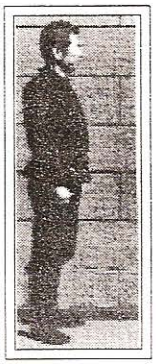
For some reason, they leave without a word.

A cold wintry day, no leaf left on the tree, a bare tree standing heroically by itself.

"Aren't you cold, big tree, without your leaves?"
"Yes, but only if I am bare, can more sunshine fall on you."

The message from the big old tree.

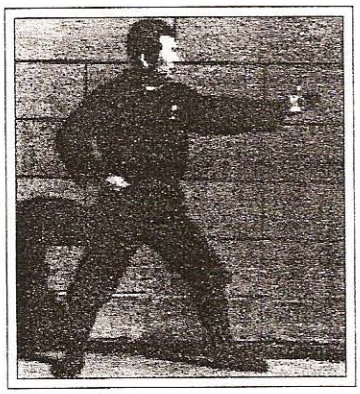




1. The "natural" stance.(*Shizen no Kamae)* An erect standing position with both feet firmly and naturally on the ground.

CHI NO KATA
(Kata of Earth)

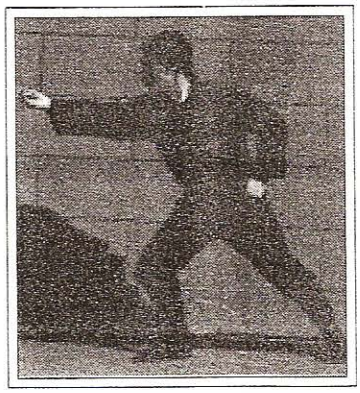
地の型



2. Pull the right foot back and stretch the left hand as if to shake hands . The right hand is at your right hip in the form of *Shito Ken* (as if you are holding a dagger). This is the *Shoshin no Kamae* (posture of First Body)

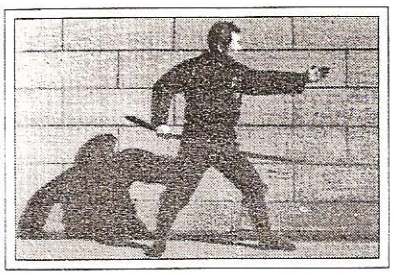
3. Step in with your right foot, twisting your body. This position has the movement and looks like you are running forward (the weight is more on your right foot).

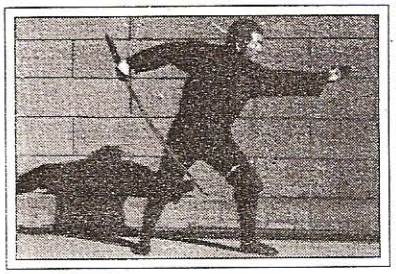
4. Carefully watch the shape of the fingers of the right hand — the index, middle and ring fingers are supporting the thumb and little fingers to give a greater force. Hand is slightly cupped.

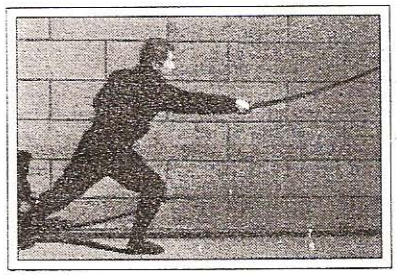


5. Open your body and thrust your right hand as you step forward and right (being aware of balance) with a weight shift to add great force to the strike.

Following pictures 1 through 3
Like *Shoshinsha no Kata* the *Chi no Kata* (Kata of Earth) is based upon the balance of spine, knee and ankle. You must swing and move from right to left as smoothly as possible from the basic position of *Shoshin no Kamae* keeping in mind not to lose your balance. You can add lots of variations to the Shoshin no Kata by using a sword or spear

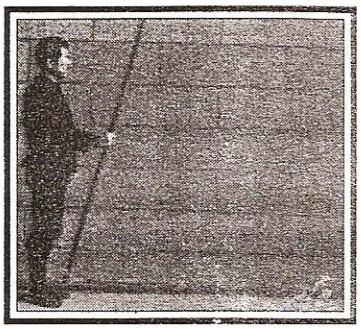


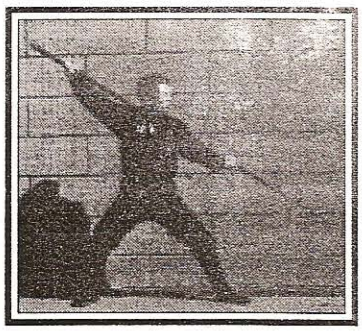


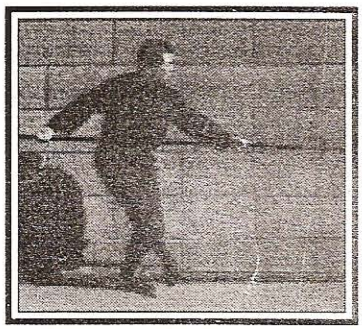


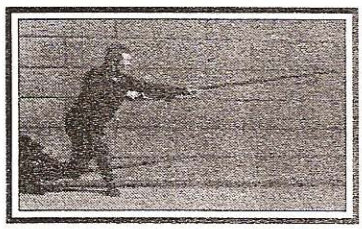
You will understand the truth of *YARI NO TSUKI* (Thrust of spear) clearly when you master the flow of *Shoshinsha no Kata.*

Please keep in mind that by understanding the balance, you will come closer to mastering the truth of these *Katas*. They will become a natural part of you as you give them life. (See four consecutive photos on the next page)



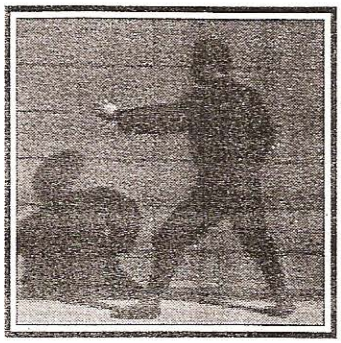






Sui no Kata
(Kata of Water)

水の型



Pull your right foot back from the Natural Stance (Shizen no Kamae) and hold that position as in I do in the photo above.

Bring your right hand in front of your face as if guarding your body, at the same time bending your left elbow and assume a posture of defense

As you slide your right foot forward, measure and decide the target point of the opponent. In this case the target point is the left side of opponent's neck.

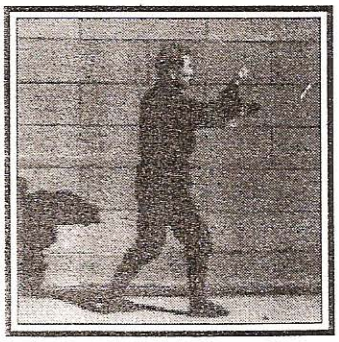
Open your fist and change your hand into a weapon. At that moment you are striking the opponent's neck. The full force of your right hand blow comes from your spine and knee.

Ka no Kata
(Kata of Fire)

火の型

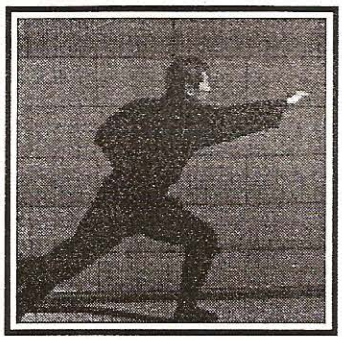
Change the Natural Stance to the *Shoshin no Kamae* by pulling the right foot back.

Change your position as in #2 of *Sui no Kata* and lift your right foot.

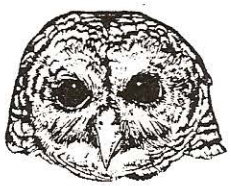


At this point, bring your right hand up to your face and prepare to make the palm of your fist face down so that you can stab the dagger to the opponent.

Change your posture to the pre-attack position.



Step forward with your right foot and thrust the "dagger" of your right hand to the side of the opponent's neck in the *Ka no Kata*. At that time your palm is facing down so the dagger points correctly. The name of the vital point at both sides of the neck is called *Uko"* in *Gyokku Ryu.*

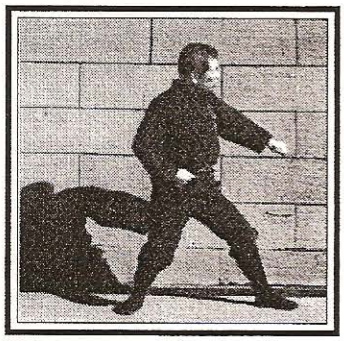


Kaze no Kata
(Kata of Wind)

風の型

This Kata involves the opponent's attack with his right foot. The first stance is *Shoshin no Kamae* from your natural stance *(Shizen no Kamae).*

The opponent kicks his right foot and you change positions to *Gedanno Kamae* to avoid his right foot and at the same instant swing the left arm down and to the left to parry the attack.



This is a side view of the position above. Make sure that your posture is in good balance.

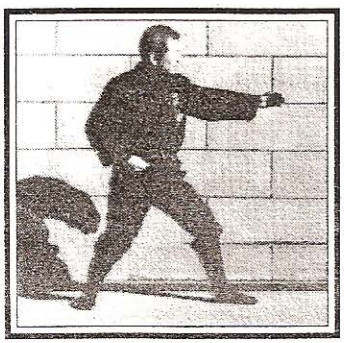
You prepare to move forward in a manner as if you were being blown by a strong tail wind.

Place your right foot forward as the wind blows from your back. Movement is natural keeping in mind this Kata is *Kaze* (wind). You move as if blown by wind.

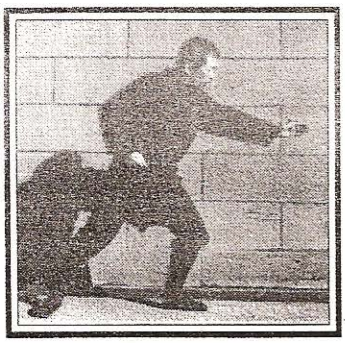
Make a fist with the right hand *(Migite Kento - right hand dagger)*, at the same time extending the thumb forward from the fist pointing at the target. Thrust the hand as if you are blowing a weapon to the target.

Kuu no Kata
(Kata of Air)

空の型

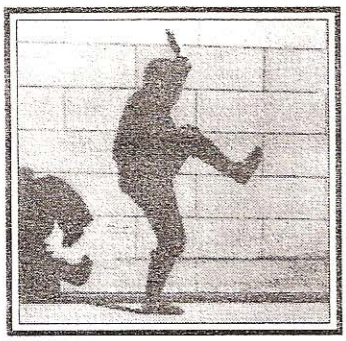


From *Shizen no Kamae* change the posture to *Shoshin no Kamae*.

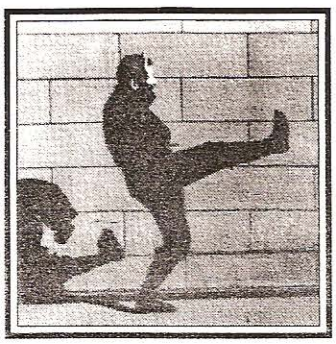


In order to avoid a kick by your opponent, empty your body. In other words, relax and do not tighten or tense your body.

The change of the body to forward or backward will be determined by the length of the opponent's leg and his strength.

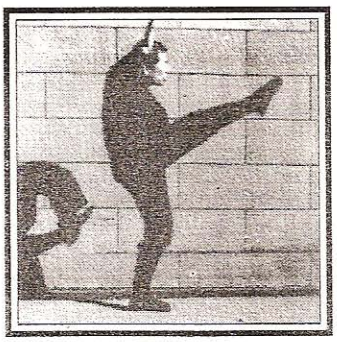


As you receive the kick, swinging your left hand downward, *(Gedan Uke)* you kick the opponent with a right heel kick. In these pictures I raise my right hand, avoiding the opponent's left hand, and my right thigh is pressed against my chest at the same time.

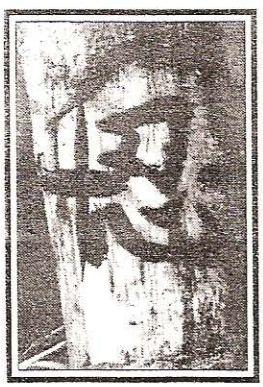


I raise my right hand for balance and send a terrible kick forward to opponent.

Please note the change of posture in this case. The right knee is bent and the right hand is raised behind the head. Make sure the line from right hand to left foot is straight and the body is shaped like a bow.



As you lean back, thrust your foot forward like an arrow toward the opponent. (Remember in the prior move the heel is thrust forward with great power) The toes act as a foot dagger *(Sokushi Ken)*.



Henso Jutsu

Here are two more paintings of ancient disguises from my archives

The disguise of a *Katsu* fish merchant. (Selling only the *Katsu* fish) During the *Senkoku Jidai* (the War period) when *Hojoshi* (of the *Hojo* clan) battle boats sailed out to meet the enemy a *Katsu* fish was seen to come flying out of the water and the battle was won. This initiated a tradition that the *Katsu* fish be served at banquets with the "Winning Wine" to wish for everlasting victory before an army went into battle. During these banquets the *Ninja* , disguised as *Katsu* fish sellers, had a good chance to sneak into their enemies' quarters and accomplish their missions.

Saru, the Japanese word for "Monkey" is pronounced the same as the word for "leave" which fosters a Japanese proverb wishing for the "leaving" of all disasters and misfortunes . For this reason the people there liked to have a Monkey show near their houses to cause the departure of bad luck from their homes. Naturally, the *Ninja* saw this as one of the best disguises for getting close to enemies and their quarters. In such a disguise the showman could shoot out poisonous darts at enemies while the monkey performed.